

### [HOC Membership](#)

The House Oceans Caucus (HOC) was formed nearly a decade ago to create a bipartisan voice within Congress on ocean issues. Representatives Sam Farr from California, Connie Mack from Florida, and Jay Inslee from Washington are the 112th Congressional co-chairs. The goal of the HOC is to build awareness, to exchange information and ideas, and to explore important issues that relate to the oceans.

Together, the co-chairs represent diverse ocean and Great Lakes environments and interests and work together to disseminate timely and relevant information to the 54 bipartisan members of the HOC. This year, the HOC, in conjunction with the [National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration \(NOAA\)](#), sponsored a briefing on marine debris that brought together experts from the agency, the industry, and non-profit organizations to discuss the impacts of marine debris on the environment and the economy, as well as solutions. Throughout this year, we plan on highlighting additional pertinent ocean issues, such as ocean acidification. In 2009 and 2010, the HOC sponsored a series of briefings on topics including coral reef conservation, the Magnuson Stevens Act, and how the oceans relate to human health.

While it is easy to think that the borders of the United States end at the shoreline, we in fact have jurisdiction over the ocean and its resources for 200 nautical miles. This area, our

exclusive economic zone, is the largest in the world and one of our greatest natural resources. Within it, our nation's security and commerce, culture and recreation are firmly entrenched. The ocean-dependent economy was worth \$138 billion dollars in 2004, 2.5 times more than the agricultural industry. Our nation's coastal states account for 80% of our population, 83% of our output, and more than three quarters of our national growth in terms of population, employment and GDP (data from the [National Ocean Economics Program](#) ).

These statistics underscore the importance of ensuring that our oceans remain a part of policy discussions in Congress, and this is the goal of the House Oceans Caucus.

Sincerely,

SAM FARR (D - CA) and [CONNIE MACK](#) (R - FL)  
Co-Chairs  
House Oceans Caucus